1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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solidarity (ceremonial), is partly responsible for the solid foundation of the kinship structure in Murngin society. Warfare also helps to prevent the breaking of tribal laws by the threat of retaliation from other social groups. Finally, it acts as the ultimate police power in the functioning of Murngin society. It is the threat of its force which ultimately prevents flagrant breaking of tribal taboos.

Causes of War

Of seventy-two recorded battles of the last twenty years in which members of Murngin factions were killed, fifty were for blood revenge—the desire to avenge the killing of a relative, usually a clansman, by members of another clan. Of these, fifteen were deliberate killings, against the tradition of what is fair cause for a war, and because it was felt that the enemies had killed the wrong people. Ten killings were due to stealing or obtaining by illegal means a woman who belonged to another clan. Five supposedly guilty magicians were killed by the clan members of victims of black magic. Five men were slain for looking at a totemic emblem under improper circumstances and thereby insulting the owning clan and endangering the clan's spiritual strength.

The idea underlying most Murngin warfare is that the same injury should be inflicted upon the enemy group that one's own group has suffered. This accomplished, a clan feels satisfied; otherwise, there is a constant compulsion toward vengeance, causing a continuous restlessness among those who are out to "buy back" the killing of one of their clansmen. The stealing of a woman provokes the same spirit, since the group feels itself injured; and only the return of the woman and a ceremonial fight, or the stealing of another woman, will satisfy the hurt to its self-esteem, unless the clan has retaliated by killing or wounding one of the enemy clansmen. The same feeling is instigated by the improper viewing of the totem—an insult and an injury to the entire clan.

Any of the above causes for war may be given deliberately or by accident, but in either case warfare is a certain consequence. If a young man chances upon an old man engaged in making a totemic emblem, the former is killed; or if a man is accidentally killed in a fight by a member of a friendly group, the dead man's people retaliate. There is, nevertheless, considerable feeling that an accident should not cause open hostilities, but it has small influence upon the public opinion of those who believe themselves injured.

There are a number of forms of ritualistic injury. If women look

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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754 food in fire made from a certain shrub; as the heat increases his throat swells till he dies. The trouble can be cured only [755] by finding the fire and pouring water on it. If a spear or spear-thrower is broken and burnt, the owner's hands become crippled and twisted by rheumatism. A saccule or bark drinking-cup also provides means for injuring the one who drank from it, for if a pronged fish-spear is stabbed into it the victim's throat swells till he dies. Maleirpa the leper had lost most of his fingers and toes long before his misfortune was attributed to magic, but someone idly recalled that, years previously, Bulambi had followed Maleirpa's footprints along a beach and had aimlessly dropped the point of his pronged fish-spear into them. Obviously Maleirpa's toes had dropped off in consequence. As the victim did not die immediately, Bulambi was not [783] killed, but when the afflicted one finally succumbs, Bulambi will need to make restitution to his next-of-kin by the gift of a canoe, an axe, or spears. Meanwhile Bulambi, the leper, and his brothers fraternize and hunt happily together.

789 'Nyirrah' is specialized magic connected with the making 787 of wind and rain, the poisoning of food before it is eaten, and the controlling of a woman's desires so that she can be made to desert her husband and follow the man of Nyirrah. Such magic comes to a man in a dream, by instruction from another Yulengor or by direct bestowal from the Nyirrah spirit-centre. When the body is asleep human spirits are free [774] to roam and converse, and then a spirit with Nyirrah powers may invite another to see him kill a man or make rain. A [778] more direct method is to go inland to a mythical tree from which Nyirrah powers are dispensed. Approaching the tree the man hears the beating of clap-sticks, and their very invisibility proves that spirits inhabit the tree. If he is brave enough to go nearer Nyirrah will automatically come upon him.